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Interacting Protein

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 Words) DAMD17-03-1-0317 is an IDEA award that focuses on the roles of BCCIP in cell cycle regulation. The approaches are over-expression and down-regulation of BCCIP by RNAi. The project has been moving on smoothly in the first 12 months. We have accomplished the scientific objectives of tasks 1-3, and 50% of tasks 4-5. We have published one paper based on this study. As an un-anticipated discovery, we have found that BCCIP also regulates p21 expression. This finding further strengthens our central hypothesis that BCCIP regulates cell cycle control. In the next funding year, we will strive to accomplish the objectives of tasks 5-6.				
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Regulation of Cell Cycle by BCCIP, a BRCA2 and CDKN1A (Cip1/p21) Interacting Protein

Introduction

DAMD17-03-1-0317 is an IDEA award that focuses on the roles of BCCIP in cell cycle regulation. The approaches are over-expression and down-regulation of BCCIP by RNAi. The project has been moving on smoothly in the first 12 months of the award. We have begun gaining significant insight on the roles of BCCIP in cell cycle control.

Body of Report

Tasks 1-3 are related to specific aim 1. It involves the construction of an inducible BCCIP β expression system (task 1), and determination of its effects on cell growth (task 2) and cell cycle progression (task 3). The original plan was to use MCF7 cells but HT1080 was proposed as an alternative. Cell growth inhibition by BCCIP has been measured in MCF7 and several other cell lines as planned. However, we noticed that cell cycle measurement was more reproducible in HT1080 cells than MCF7 cells. Thus, we have moved on to use the alternative HT1080 cell line when cell cycle measurement is involved. The results have been included in a publication (see appendix 1 for details). The main conclusions from this study were that over-expression of BCCIP inhibits cell growth (including MCF7 cells) (Figures 2 and 3 of Appendix 1), and delays the progression of G1 to S transition (Figure 5 in Appendix 1). However, we did not observe any significant effect of BCCIP overexpression on G2/M transition. Therefore, we consider the objectives of tasks 1-3 have been achieved.

One unanticipated result from tasks 1-3 was that p21 expression can be induced by BCCIP expression (Figure 6 of Appendix 1). This is a significant novel finding, since it implicates that BCCIP may regulate p21 function by at least two pathways, i.e. by regulating p21 expression, and by directly interacting with p21.

Tasks 4 and 5 are to determine the genetic interactions between p21, BRCA2 and BCCIP genes in cell cycle control by over-expressing BCCIP in BRCA2 and p21 deficient cells. We have found that over-expression of BCCIP resulted in reduced cell growth inhibition in a p21 deficient background (Figure 4 of Appendix 1). Because deficiency of p21 itself results in cell cycle deregulation, we did not observe further defect in G1/S checkpoint even BCCIP was over-expressed. Therefore, we consider the objectives on genetic interaction between p21 and BCCIP have been accomplished. We will concentrate on the genetic interaction between BRCA2 and BCCIP in the context of cell cycle control in the future.

The finding that over-expression of BCCIP induces p21 levels (tasks 1-3) has led us to investigate whether down-regulation of BCCIP results in reduced p21 expression. Because BRCA2 regulates p53 activity and p21 expression, we further hypothesize that BCCIP may regulate p21 expression by a BRCA2 dependent pathway. This will serve as an ideal platform to accomplish the rest objectives of tasks 4-5, i.e. the genetic interaction between BCCIP and BRCA2 in regulating cell cycle. This will be our focus in the next 12 month.

Tasks 6-7 will establish cell lines with impaired BCCIP function to determine the role of BCCIP in cell cycle. We have initiated experiments using RNAi interference to achieve this goal. We have made retrovirus and adenovirus based short hairpin RNA expression systems to achieve the

objectives of tasks 6-7. We anticipate reporting the results of these studies in the next annual report.

Task 8: we have published 1 manuscript (appendix 1). We anticipate that at least one manuscript will be submitted/published in the next 12 months.

Key Research Accomplishments

- We have confirmed that BCCIP β also interacts with p21
- Using an inducible system, we have demonstrated that overexpression of BCCIP delays G1 to S transition
- We have shown a p21-dependent growth inhibition by over-expressed BCCIP
- We have found a potential novel mechanism by which BCCIP may regulate p21 function, i.e. via the regulation of p21 expression

Reportable Outcome

One publication (attached as appendix 1):

Xiangbing Meng, Jingmei Liu, and Zhiyuan Shen, Inhibition of G1 to S Cell Cycle Progression by BCCIP β . Cell Cycle, 2004, 3:343

Conclusions

The major scientific findings in the last 12 months are: BCCIP regulates p21 expression and inhibits G1 to S progression. This suggests a critical role of BCCIP in cell cycle control. We have accomplished the objectives of tasks 1-3, and 50% of the tasks 4-5. RNA silencing vectors to be used for tasks 6-7 have been constructed.

References: none

Appendix

1. Xiangbing Meng, Jingmei Liu, Zhiyuan Shen, 2004. Inhibition of G1 to S Cell Cycle Progression by BCCIP β . Cell Cycle, 3:343

Report

Inhibition of G₁ to S Cell Cycle Progression by BCCIP β

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KEY WORDS

BCCIP, Tok-1, p21, CDKN1A, Cip1, G₁-S transition, BRCA2

ABBREVIATIONS

BCCIP	BRCA2 and CDKN1A (Cip1/p21/Waf1) Interacting Protein
Doc	doxycycline
Noc	nocodazole
WCE	whole cell extract

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Dr. Bert Vogelstein (Johns Hopkins University) for providing HCT116p21^{-/-}(8054) and the HCT116p21^{+/+} parental cell, and Mr. Adrian Maestas for critical reading of the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The BCCIP α protein was identified as a BRCA2 and CDKN1A (p21, or p21^{Waf1/Cip1}) Interacting Protein. It binds to a highly conserved domain proximate to the C-terminus of BRCA2 protein and the C-terminal domain of the CDK-inhibitor p21. Previous reports showed that BCCIP α enhances the inhibitory activity of p21 toward CDK2 and that BCCIP α inhibits the growth of certain tumor cells. Here we show that a second isoform, BCCIP β , also binds to p21 and inhibits cell growth. The growth inhibition by BCCIP β can be partially abrogated in p21 deficient cells. Overexpression of BCCIP β delays the G₁ to S progression and results in an elevated p21 expression. These data suggest BCCIP β as a new regulator for the G₁-S cell cycle progression and cell growth control.

INTRODUCTION

The human BCCIP α (also named Tok-1 α) was independently identified by two groups as a BRCA2 and p21^{Waf1/Cip1} (referred as p21 hereafter) interacting protein.^{1,2} The BCCIP α interacting domain of BRCA2 (amino acids 2973-3053) resides in a recently termed OB2 domain according to the BRCA2 crystal structure.^{1,3} The BCCIP α interacting domain of p21 locates at the C-terminus overlapping the PCNA binding domain and the AKT phosphorylation region of p21.^{2,4-6} Overexpression of BCCIP α inhibits cell growth¹ and enhances the inhibitory activity of p21 toward the histone H1 kinase activity of CDK2, suggesting a role for BCCIP α in G₁/S cell cycle control.² A second isoform, BCCIP β , has also been identified.^{1,2} These two isoforms, BCCIP α (322 amino acids) and BCCIP β (314 amino acids), are products of alternative splicing of a single gene on chromosome 10q26, and they share 258 identical N-terminal amino acids.⁷ In addition, certain cancer tissues and cell lines display reduced expression of BCCIP α and BCCIP β .^{1,7} However, it was not clear whether or not BCCIP β also plays a role in G₁/S control.

Ono et al mapped the p21 interacting region to an internal BCCIP α domain that is shared with BCCIP β ,² which would suggest an interaction between BCCIP β and p21. Yet, the same report was not able to demonstrate this interaction using an in vitro protein binding assay.² In addition, it was not known whether BCCIP β would inhibit cell growth as BCCIP α did. The purpose of this report is to clarify these issues. We show that BCCIP β also interacted with p21 in vivo and inhibited cell growth. We further show that BCCIP β delayed the G₁-S progression during the cell cycle. In addition, the cell growth inhibition effects of BCCIP α and BCCIP β was partially abrogated by p21 defect, and overexpression of BCCIP α or BCCIP β stimulated p21 expression. These data suggest BCCIP β as a new regulator for G₁-S progression.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Cell Culture and Gene Transfection. HT1080 cells were cultured in α -MEM medium (Gibco BRL, Grand Island, NY). HeLa, MCF7, 293, A172, HCT116/p21^{-/-}(8054) and HCT116/p21^{+/+} cells were cultured in DMEM medium (Hyclone, Logan, UT). All cell culture medium were supplemented with 10% fetal calf serum (Nova-Tech Inc., Grand Island, NE) and 1% Penicillin/Streptomycin (Biowhittaker, Walkersville, MD). Plasmid DNA transfection into mammalian cells was performed with the Geneporter transfection kit (Gene Therapy Systems Inc., San Diego, CA), and retroviral mediated gene transfer was performed as previously described.¹

Doxycycline (Doc)-Inducible BCCIP β Expression. Doc-inducible overexpression of BCCIP β in HT1080 cells was established by pRevTet-ON system (Clontech, Palo Alto, CA). HA-tagged BCCIP β were cloned into pREV-TRE (Clontech, Palo Alto, CA) via the SalI site while under the control of the tetracycline-responsive element (TRE), resulting in pREV-TRE/HA-BCCIP β . The latter vector was introduced via retroviral infections into HT1080 cells that had been previously

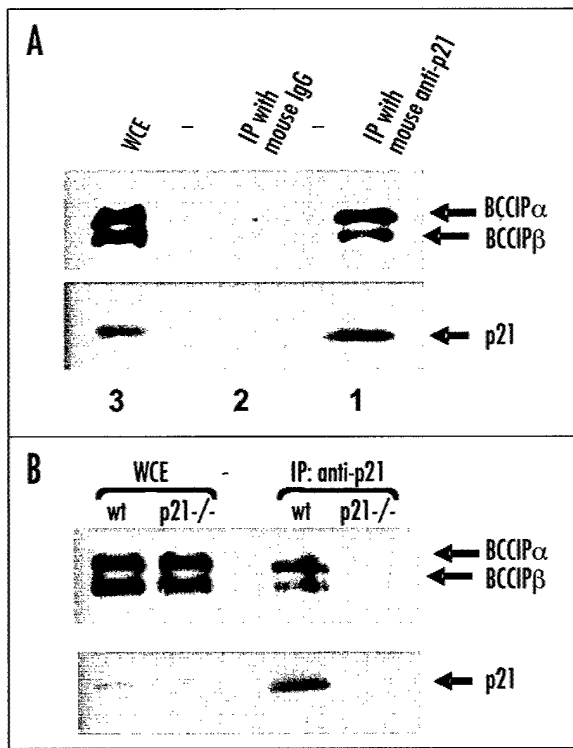


Figure 1. Interaction between BCCIP and p21. (A) Equal amounts of whole cell extract (WCE) from HCT116 cells were incubated with agarose resin conjugated with mouse anti-p21 monoclonal antibody to precipitate endogenous p21 protein (lane 1). Nonspecific mouse IgG conjugated to the same resin was used as the negative control (lane 2). Lane 3 is the whole cell extract. The top panel was blotted with rabbit anti-BCCIP antibodies, and the bottom panel was blotted with anti-p21 antibody. The figure shows that endogenous BCCIP α/β proteins can be coprecipitated with p21. (B) Whole cell extract from p21 wild type (lanes wt) and p21 deficient (lanes p21^{-/-}) HCT116 cells were precipitated by anti-p21 monoclonal antibody conjugated with agarose resin. The coprecipitated endogenous BCCIP proteins were visualized by anti-BCCIP blot (top panel). The precipitated p21 was visualized by anti-p21 blot (bottom panel). This figure shows that BCCIP α/β can only be coprecipitated with the anti-p21 resin from the p21 wild type cells, but not the p21 deficient cells.

transfected with the pTet-On vector that expressed rtTA transcription factor. Selection in neomycin and hygromycin resulted in a Doc-inducible HA-BCCIP β expressing cell line designated HT1080/TetOn-BCCIP β . Doc-induced HA-BCCIP β expression in this cell line was confirmed by anti-HA immunoblot.

DNA Content Based Cell Cycle Analysis. The method originally described by Vindelov et al was adapted to stain nuclear DNA for flow cytometry analysis.⁸ Briefly, cells were trypsinized, washed with PBS, and fixed with 70% ethanol. Then cells were pelleted, washed with PBS, and resuspended in 200 μ l of citrate buffer (250 mM Sucrose, 0.05% DMSO, 40 mM Trisodium citrate, pH7.6). Nine hundred microliters of Solution A [0.003% trypsin in stock buffer (3.4 mM Trisodium citrate, 0.1% Nonidet P 40, 1.5 mM Spermine tetrahydrochloride, 0.5 mM Trizma, pH 7.6)] were added and cells were incubated at room temperature for 10 minutes. Afterwards, 750 μ l of Solution B (0.025% Trypsin inhibitor, 0.01% Ribonuclease A in stock buffer) was added for another incubation of 10 minutes at room temperature. Then, 750 μ l of Solution C (0.0416% Propidium iodide, 3.3 mM Spermine tetrahydrochloride in stock buffer) was added to the cells, which were then ready for flow cytometry analysis. In each assay, 20,000 cells were collected by FACScan (Becton Dickinson, San Jose, CA) and analyzed by CellQuest software provided.

Antibodies and Western Blot. Cells were treated in lysis buffer (50 mM HEPES pH7.6, 250 mM NaCl, 5 mM EDTA, 0.1% NP-40). Proteins were

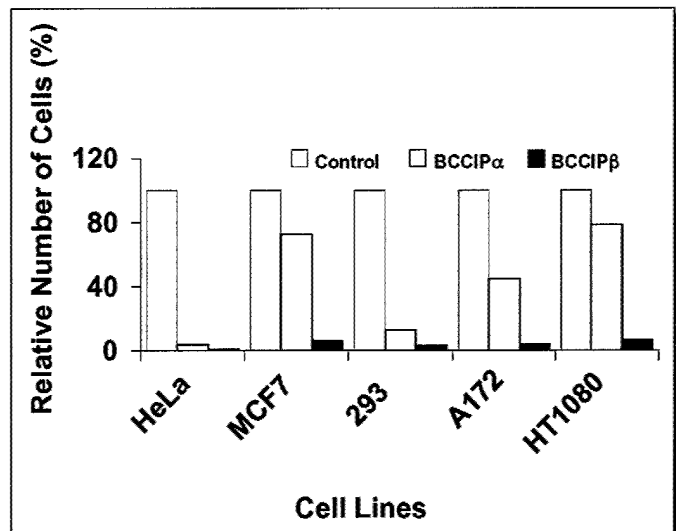


Figure 2. Inhibition of cell growth by retroviral-mediated BCCIP expression. HeLa, MCF7, 293, A172 and HT1080 cells were plated at 0.1×10^6 cells/ml. Eighteen hours after plating, the cells were infected with viruses that expressed HA-BCCIP α and HA-BCCIP β . Virus packed with vacant vector was used as control. Infected cells were selected with puromycin for 96 hours and allowed to grow for an additional 3 days. The numbers of cells were then determined by counting. Shown are the relative numbers of cells normalized to the cells infected with vacant control vectors.

separated by 10% SDS-PAGE. BCCIP or p21 were detected by appropriate specific antibodies. Anti-p21 antibodies were purchased from BD Transduction Laboratories (Lexington, KY). The anti-BCCIP antibodies have been described previously.¹ In certain cases, β -actin monoclonal antibody was used to confirm that equal amount of protein quantity was loaded in each samples.

Immunoprecipitations. To precipitate the endogenous p21 protein, the Ab3 mouse anti-p21 monoclonal antibody (Oncogene Research ProductsTM, La Jolla, CA) was immobilized to protein G agarose beads by SeizeTM Mammalian Immunoprecipitation Kit (Pierce, Rockford, IL). Equal amount of nonspecific mouse IgG conjugated agarose (Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Santa Cruz, CA) was used as negative control. Cells were washed with PBS, pelleted, treated with lysis buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.5, 150 mM NaCl, 0.5% Tween-20, 0.25% NP-40, 1 mM Na₃VO₄, 100 μ g/ml PMSE, 20 μ g/ml aprotinin, 10 μ g/ml Leupeptin), sonicated, and centrifuged for 10 min at 15,000 rpm. The supernatant (whole cell extract) was treated with Benzonase nuclease (Novagene, Madison, WI), which digests DNA and RNA to eliminate their potential interference in protein complex formation. One mg whole cell extracts was incubated with agarose/anti-p21 conjugates for 4 hours at 4°C with rotation. Then, the agarose beads were washed 10 times with RIPA buffer (1X PBS, 1% NP-40, 0.5% DOC, 0.1% SDS, 1 mM Na₃VO₄, 100 μ g/ml PMSE, 20 μ g/ml aprotinin, 10 μ g/ml Leupeptin). Precipitated proteins were visualized by Western blot using appropriate antibodies (see figure legends for specifics).

Northern Blot for p21 mRNA. Total RNA was extracted by RNAqueousTM kit (Ambion, Houston, TX). Twenty μ g of total RNA from each cell line was resolved on a 0.8% agarose gel containing formaldehyde and then blotted to nylon membranes by capillary transfer. The membranes were hybridized to a full-length p21 cDNA labeled with 32P-dCTP by Ready-To-GoTM DNA labeling kit (Amersham Pharmacia, Piscataway, NJ). The blot was hybridized overnight at 42°C with p21 probe in ULTRAhybTM buffer (Ambion Inc, Houston, TX), washed three times for 5–10 minutes at room temperature with 2 x SSC and 0.1% SDS, and then three times for 15 minutes at 42°C with 0.1 x SSC and 0.1% SDS. The same membrane were stripped and rehybridized with β -actin probes. The hybridized p21 mRNA signals were scanned with STORM PhosphorImager and quantified by the SPOTFINDER software (Molecular Dynamics, Sunnyvale, CA).

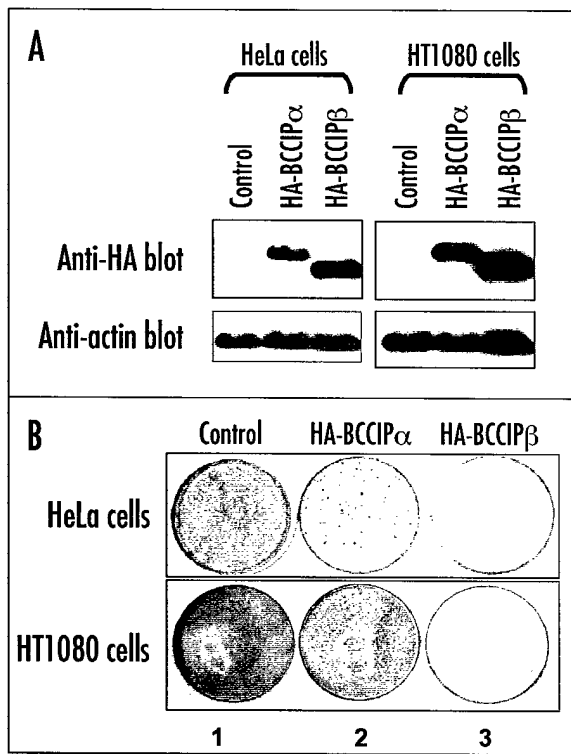


Figure 3. Expression of BCCIP reduces colony formation. (A) Expression of exogenous BCCIP α and BCCIP β in HeLa and HT1080 cells shortly after the transfection. Half million of HeLa and HT1080 cells were transfected with 10 μ g of plasmid vectors expressing HA-BCCIP α or HA-BCCIP β . Control groups were transfected with vacant vector. Forty-eight hours after the transfection, equal amounts of protein were analyzed for HA-BCCIP α and HA-BCCIP β expression by anti-HA-blot (top panel). Anti-actin blot (bottom panel) was used to confirm loading of equal amount of total proteins. (B) Inhibition of cell growth by BCCIP α and BCCIP β identified by colony formation. Half million of HeLa and HT1080 cells were transfected with 10 μ g of plasmid vectors expressing HA-BCCIP α (column 2) or HA-BCCIP β (column 3). Control groups were transfected with vacant vector (column 1). Stably transfected cells were selected with puromycin and visualized by crystal violet staining after two weeks of selection.

RESULTS

Interactions Between Endogenous BCCIP β and p21. The interaction between p21 and BCCIP α /Tok-1 α was originally reported by Ono, et al.² Here, we reinvestigate the p21-BCCIP interaction for the following reasons. First, the interaction between BCCIP α and p21 was demonstrated by several methods, including yeast two-hybrid system, in vitro protein interaction assay using recombinant proteins purified from bacteria, coimmunoprecipitation with exogenously expressed p21 and BCCIP, and intracellular colocalization visualized by immunostaining. Yet, no confirmation using endogenous p21 and BCCIP proteins was documented.² Second, the p21-interaction domain was mapped to amino acids 161-259 of BCCIP α which are also present in BCCIP β .² Although this implied a potential interaction between BCCIP β and p21, the same report was not able to detect it using in vitro protein binding assays.² Third, BCCIP β expression is more abundant than BCCIP α in many cell lines and tissues¹ and its expression was reduced in certain human tumor.⁷ Therefore, it is imperatively important to clarify whether endogenous BCCIP β interacts with p21. We covalently conjugated a monoclonal anti-p21 antibody to an agarose resin. This minimized the interference of soluble IgG in the subsequent immunoprecipitation of coprecipitated BCCIP proteins. As shown in Figure 1A, resin-conjugated with anti-p21 antibody effectively precipitated the endogenous

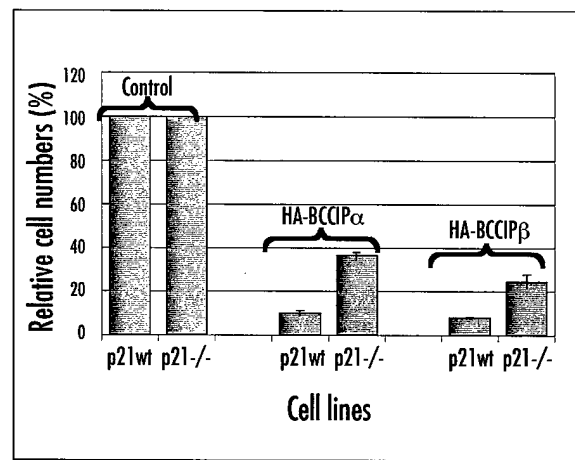


Figure 4. The inhibition of cell growth by BCCIP is partially dependent on p21 status. p21^{-/-} and p21 wild type HCT116 cells, which are an isogenic set of human colon adenocarcinoma cell lines differing only in their p21 status, were seeded in 60mm plates at 1×10^6 cells/ml. Eighteen hours after the plating, the cells were transfected with equal amounts of plasmids that expressed HA-BCCIP α or HA-BCCIP β and selected with puromycin for 2 weeks. Survival cells were then counted. Shown are the relative numbers of cells normalized to the same cell lines transfected with control vector. This figure shows that deficiency of p21 partially abrogates the cell growth inhibition conferred by HA-BCCIP α and HA-BCCIP β .

BCCIP α and BCCIP β , while nonspecific mouse IgG did not. To confirm this result, the whole cell extracts (WCE) from p21-deficient HCT116/p21^{-/-} and the parental p21-proficient HCT116 cells were precipitated by the same anti-p21 agarose resin as in Figure 1A. As shown in Figure 1B, endogenous BCCIP α and BCCIP β can only be precipitated from the p21 proficient cell, and not from the p21 deficient cells. These data confirmed that endogenous BCCIP α interacts with p21 and also suggested that BCCIP β interacts with p21. However, BCCIP β seems have a weaker interaction with p21 than BCCIP α .

Growth Inhibition by BCCIP β . In a previous study, we reported that overexpression of BCCIP α moderately inhibits the growth of certain cancer cells.¹ These data were obtained from cell lines infected with retroviruses that constitutively overexpressed BCCIP α . Considering that BCCIP β interacts with p21 and shares 258 identical N-terminal amino acids with BCCIP α , we tested whether expression of BCCIP β may affect cell growth using the retroviral approach as described previously.¹ We found that retroviral-mediated overexpression of BCCIP β indeed inhibited cell growth among the cell lines tested (Fig. 2). Furthermore, BCCIP β inhibited cell growth at a greater extent than BCCIP α .

To confirm this result, colony formation experiments were performed. We transfected equal amounts of a BCCIP α and BCCIP β expression vectors bearing a puromycin selection marker into HeLa and HT1080 cell and selected for puromycin-resistant cells for two weeks. Figure 3A shows the levels of exogenously expressed BCCIP α and BCCIP β proteins shortly after the transfection. Transfection of vectors expressing BCCIP α or BCCIP β resulted in fewer surviving colonies when compared to control (Fig. 3B). In addition, fewer surviving cells were observed on dishes transfected with BCCIP β -expressing vector than that of BCCIP α (Fig. 3B). These data confirmed that BCCIP β inhibits cell growth and suggested that BCCIP β has a stronger inhibitory effect on cell growth than BCCIP α . The apparent discrepancy between this stronger inhibition on cell growth by BCCIP β (Figs. 2 and 3) and the weaker BCCIP β -p21 interaction (Fig. 1) will be addressed later.

The Inhibition of Cell Growth by BCCIP Can Be Partially Abrogated by p21 Deficiency. Because BCCIP α and BCCIP β interact with p21, it is possible that BCCIP α β may inhibit cell growth through a p21-dependent mechanism. To test this, we transfected equal amounts of BCCIP α and

BCCIP β expression vectors into p21^{-/-} and p21 wild type HCT116 cells, which are a pair of isogenic human colon adenocarcinoma cell lines differing only in their p21 status.⁹ After selection of puromycin-resistant cells, we found that overexpression of either BCCIP α or BCCIP β inhibits cell growth in p21 wild type HCT116 cells as expected (Fig. 4). How the inhibition of cell growth by BCCIP α or BCCIP β is partially abrogated in p21^{-/-} HCT116 cells. These data suggest that the growth inhibition of BCCIP α β is at least partially dependent on a functional p21. However, the growth inhibition by BCCIP in p21^{-/-} cells was not returned to the same level of the control, implying additional mechanism other than p21 may be responsible for further inhibition of cell growth. This remains to be identified.

Overexpression of BCCIP β Causes Delayed G₁ to S Progression. To address the cellular mechanism by which BCCIP β inhibits cell growth, we asked whether BCCIP β inhibits the G₁/S transition as it interacts with p21. BCCIP β and HT1080 cells were used because HT1080 has wild type p53, and BCCIP β inhibited HT1080 growth more than BCCIP α did (Figs. 2 and 3). We constructed a Dox-inducible BCCIP β overexpressing HT1080 cell line (Fig. 5A). As predicted, when BCCIP β overexpression is induced, the growth rate of HT1080 cells is inhibited (Fig. 5B). To measure the G₁-S progression, we treated cells with 0.1 μ g/ml nocodazole to block cells at M phase so that no new G₁ cells could be generated. Therefore, the gradual disappearance of the G₁ peak could be used to evaluate the dynamics of the G₁-S progression. As shown in Figure 5C, the G₁ phase peak in the control cells nearly disappeared by 8 hours after addition of nocodazole (columns 1 and 2), while a significant amount of BCCIP β -overexpressing cells were retained in G₁ phase in the same period (column 3). Some BCCIP β -overexpressing cells remained in G₁ phase for up to 24 hours after the nocodazole block was administered (column 3). These data suggest BCCIP β as an inhibitor for G₁-S progression, proving a cellular mechanism by which BCCIP β inhibits cell growth.

Overexpression of BCCIP β Results in Elevated p21 Levels. Although Figure 5 has provided cellular evidence for BCCIP β as a regulator for G₁-S progression, the molecular mechanisms by which BCCIP β regulates G₁-S progression is unclear. Ono et al suggested that the interaction between BCCIP α and p21 resulted in an enhanced inhibitory activity of p21 toward the histone H1 kinase activity of CDK2.² It would be logical to speculate that BCCIP β also inhibits CDK2 activity because BCCIP β interacts with p21. However, this does not explain a previously observed discrepancy between Figure 1 and Figure 2. Even though BCCIP β had weaker interaction with p21 than BCCIP α (Fig. 1), it had a stronger inhibition on cell growth than BCCIP α (Figs. 2 and 3). We sought for an alternative explanation.

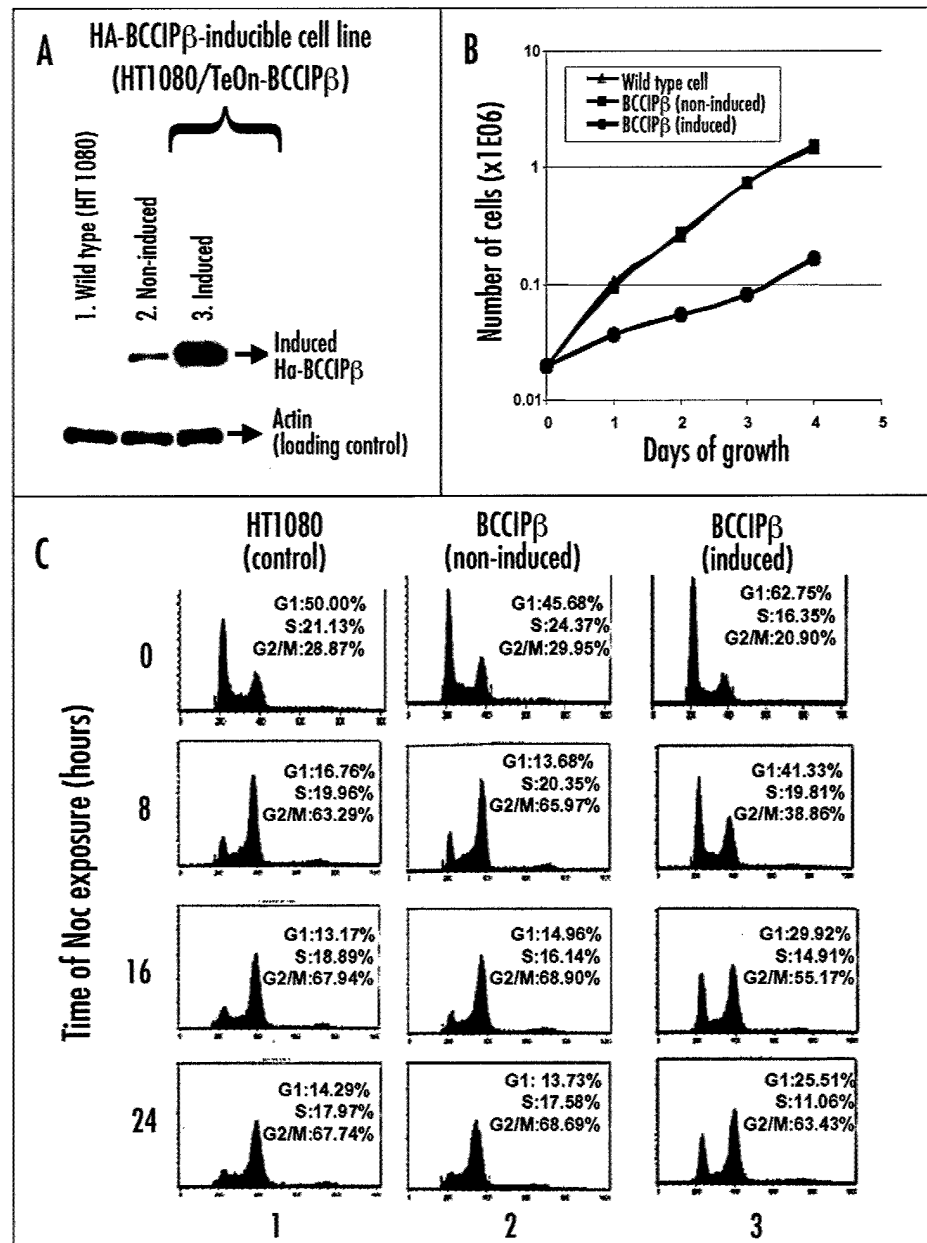


Figure 5. Induced BCCIP β overexpression delays the G₁-S progression. (A) Doc-inducible BCCIP β expression in HT1080 cells. HA-tagged BCCIP β was cloned into pREV-TRE (Clontech), which was introduced via retroviral infections into HT1080 cells that had been previously transfected with pTet-On vector. This resulted in a Doc-inducible HA-BCCIP β expressing cell line, designated HT1080/TetOn-BCCIP β . Shown in the top panel is the exogenously expressed HA-BCCIP β levels detected by anti-HA antibodies. The same membrane was reblotted with anti-actin (bottom panel) to confirm loading of equal amounts of protein for each sample. As shown, HA-BCCIP β was significantly induced by addition of Doc in this cell line (lane 3) compared to noninduced condition (lane 2). The control cell line (lane 1) is the wild type HT1080 cells treated with Doc. (B) Induced BCCIP β expression inhibits cell growth. Shown are the growth curves of a wild type HT1080 cells (triangle), HT1080/TetOn-BCCIP β cells with noninduced BCCIP β expression (square), and HT1080/TetOn-BCCIP β cells with induced BCCIP β expression (circle). This figure shows that induced BCCIP β overexpression inhibits HT1080 growth. (C) Induced-BCCIP β expression delays G₁-S progression. HT1080/TetOn-BCCIP β cells as in panel A were treated with Doc for 3 days to induce BCCIP β expression (column 3). Control groups are mock-induced HT1080/TetOn-BCCIP β (column 2) or wild type HT1080 treated with Doc (column 1). Then, 0.1 μ g/ml of nocodazole (Noc) was added to the cells. Various times after continuous Noc treatment (labeled on the left) cells were collected for flow cytometric DNA content analysis. The percentage of cells in G₁, S, and G₂/M are shown in each panel. The gradual disappearance of the G₁-peak represents the transition of G₁-phase cells into S-phase. This figure shows that overexpression of BCCIP β delays the G₁-S transition.

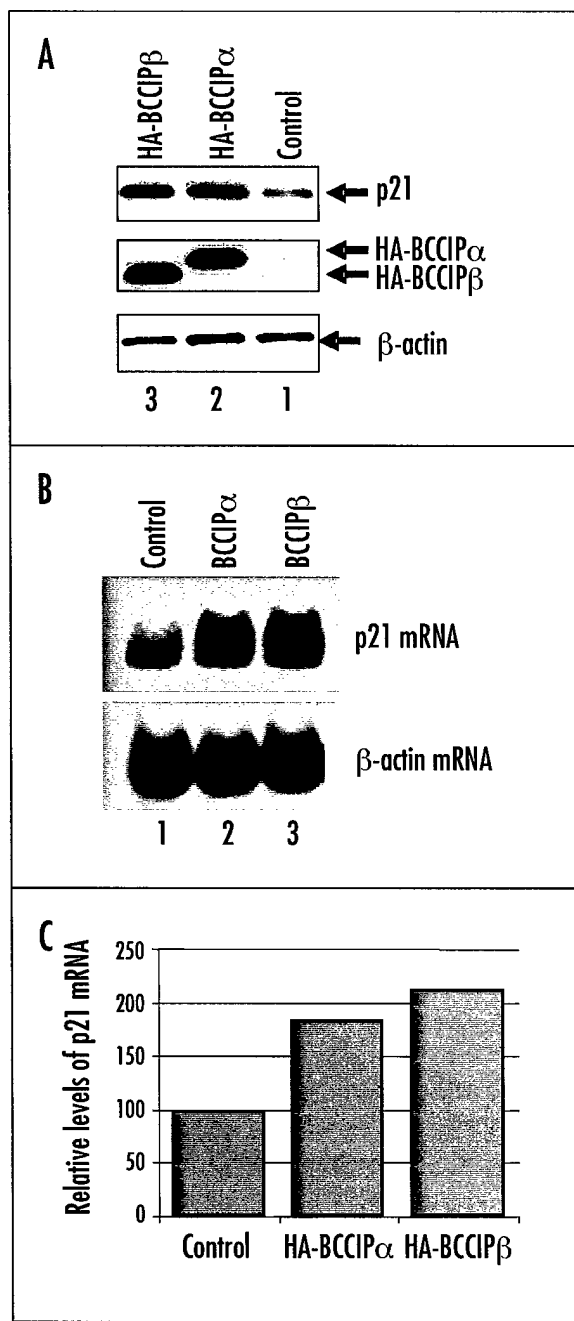


Figure 6. Overexpression of BCCIP stimulates p21 level. (A) Overexpression of BCCIP enhances p21 protein level. HT1080 cells were infected with HA-BCCIP α or HA-BCCIP β expressing retroviruses and selected with puromycin. Then, p21 proteins in HT1080 cells overexpressing HA-BCCIP α (lane 2), HA-BCCIP β (lane 3), or vacant vector (lane 1) were measured by anti-p21 blot (top panel). HA-antibody was used to detect the exogenously expressed HA-tagged BCCIP α or BCCIP β (middle panel). Anti- β -actin antibody (bottom panel) was used to confirm loading of equal amount of total proteins in each lane. This figure shows that overexpression of BCCIP α and BCCIP β enhanced p21 protein levels. (B) Northern blot of p21 mRNA in cells overexpressing BCCIP. Equal amounts of total RNA extracted from control (lane 1), HA-BCCIP α expressing (lane 2), and HA-BCCIP β expressing (lane 3) cells were analyzed by Northern blots with p21 cDNA (top panel) and β -actin cDNA (bottom panel). This figure shows that expression of exogenous BCCIP results in elevated levels of p21 mRNA. (C) Quantification of relative p21 mRNA levels in HA-BCCIP α and HA-BCCIP β expressing cells. Shown are quantified p21 levels as normalized to the actin mRNA level (see "Material and Methods" for details).

It was previously reported that BRCA2 protein inhibits the transcription activity of p53, and defect of BRCA2 results in elevated p53 and p21 protein levels.^{10,11} Since BCCIP also interacts with BRCA2,¹ we hypothesized that overexpression of BCCIP may affect the p21 expression level as an alternative mechanism for BCCIP to regulate G₁-S transition. To test this, HA-tagged BCCIP α/β proteins were overexpressed in HT1080 cells, and the p21 protein and mRNA levels were measured. As shown in Figure 6, overexpression of BCCIP resulted in elevated p21 protein and mRNA levels. BCCIP β increased p21 mRNA expression by 220%, while BCCIP α did so by ~180% (Fig. 6C). Furthermore, we did not observe a stabilization of p21 proteins in BCCIP α/β overexpressing cells after cycloheximide treatment (data not shown). This suggests an alternative mechanism by which BCCIP may regulate G₁ to S progression, i.e., stimulating p21 expression. In addition, BCCIP β had a stronger effect on p21 mRNA expression than BCCIP α (Fig. 6C). This may explain why BCCIP β inhibits cell growth more than BCCIP α does (Figs. 2 and 3) although it had a weaker interaction with p21 (Fig. 1).

DISCUSSION

Although both BCCIP α and BCCIP β colocalize with p21 in nuclei, and the p21-binding domain is located in amino acids 161–258 of the common region between BCCIP α and BCCIP β , a previous report did not identify an interaction between BCCIP β and p21 in vitro.² The authors speculated that the BCCIP β unique C-terminal region (amino acids 259 to 314) may have interfered with the binding between p21 and BCCIP β . In this report, we demonstrate that both endogenous BCCIP α and BCCIP β can actually coprecipitate endogenous p21 protein, although the interaction between p21 and BCCIP β is relatively weaker than that of BCCIP α (Fig. 1). Therefore, our data clarified an important issue on BCCIP/p21 interaction.

Although the interaction between p21 and BCCIP suggests a role for BCCIP in G₁-S control, no cellular evidence has been documented before. Our data showed that BCCIP β also inhibits cell growth and this inhibition is most likely due to an inhibition on the G₁-S progression during cell cycle. These data have provided cellular evidence that BCCIP β is a new regulator for G₁-S progression. We further demonstrated that BCCIP regulate p21 expression as a mechanism by which BCCIP may regulate G₁-S progression.

The molecular mechanism by which BCCIP regulates G₁-S progression is largely unclear at this moment. However, several scenarios are worth discussion. First, the direct interaction between BCCIP and p21 may affect p21's effectiveness toward the CDK2 activity as suggested by One, et al.² Still, this mechanism cannot completely explain the phenotypes observed. Specifically, BCCIP β showed a much weaker interaction with p21 than BCCIP α (Fig. 1), yet it has stronger inhibition on cell growth (Figs. 2 and 3). Second, overexpression of BCCIP may stimulate p21 expression as shown in Figure 6 via a previous unidentified mechanism. Obviously, the details of this mechanism remain to be elucidated. However, it is possible that overexpression of BCCIP may reduce BRCA2's inhibitory activity toward p53, since it was previously reported that BRCA2 inhibit p53's transcription activity;^{10,11} BCCIP interacts with BRCA2,¹ and p21 expression is largely controlled by p53.^{12–15} Third, it is known that the C-terminus of p21 is the substrate for AKT phosphorylation,^{4,6,16} which regulates the PCNA-p21 interaction and the redistribution of p21 protein between nucleus and cytoplasm.^{6,16–18} Since BCCIP interacts with this C-terminal domain of p21, and BCCIP is largely a nuclear protein, it is possible that BCCIP may play a role in retaining p21 proteins in the nucleus thus promoting the inhibition of G₁-S progression. Alternatively, BCCIP may regulate

the G₁-S progression by modulating the p21-PCNA interaction, a scenario being investigated.

As shown in Figure 4, defect of p21 cannot completely abrogate the inhibition of cell growth by BCCIP $\alpha\beta$. It is possible that other CDK inhibitors, such as p27, may also be involved in the growth inhibition by BCCIP. It is intriguing that an elevated p27 protein expression can also be detected in cells overexpressing BCCIP proteins (Meng, et al. unpublished data). Therefore, it is possible that BCCIP may also inhibit cell growth and G₁-S progression via a p21-independent mechanism. In summary, our data suggest BCCIP β as a new regulator for G-S progression in the cell cycle, which is partially related to its role in regulating p21 function.

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